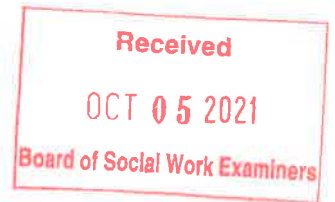


<b>IN THE MATTER OF</b>	*	<b>BEFORE THE STATE BOARD</b>
<b>SANDRA BOLINGER, LBSW</b>	*	<b>OF SOCIAL WORK</b>
<b>License No. 20383</b>	*	<b>EXAMINERS</b>
<b>Respondent</b>	*	<b>Case No. 2018-2563</b>



\* \* \* \* \*

**FINAL CONSENT ORDER**

The State Board of Social Work Examiners (the "Board") charged **SANDRA BOLINGER, LBSW** (the "Respondent"), with violation of certain provisions of Md. Code Ann., Health Occ. §§ 19-101, *et seq.*, (2014 Repl. Vol. and 2020 Supp.) and the Code of Maryland Regulations (COMAR).

Specifically, the Board charged the Respondent with violation of the following provisions of § 19-311:

Subject to the hearing provisions of § 19-312 of this subtitle, the Board may deny a license to any applicant, fine a licensee, reprimand any licensee, place any licensee on probation, or suspend or revoke a license if the applicant or licensee:

- (2) Fraudulently or deceptively uses a license;
- (4) Commits any act of ...misconduct in the practice of social work;
- (5) Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work;
- (6) Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board[;].

The Board further charged the Respondent with a violation of its Code of Ethics, COMAR 10.42.03:

.01 Scope and Purpose.

- A. This chapter governs the professional conduct of social workers licensed by the Board regardless of whether the service delivery is in person, telephonically, or electronically.
- B. The objective of this chapter is the protection of the public. The best interest of the public shall be the primary guide in determining the appropriate professional conduct of all individuals whose activities are regulated by the Board.

§ 10.42.03.03. Responsibilities to Clients:

C. The licensee may not:

- (1) Participate or condone dishonesty, fraud, deceit, or misrepresentation;
- (4) Engage in solicitation which amounts to fraud, intimidation, or undue influence;

§ 10.42.03.04. Responsibilities to Colleagues

- B. Licensees may not ...verbally abuse or intimidate colleagues.

**FINDINGS OF FACT**

The Board finds that:

**BACKGROUND**

1. At all times relevant to the charges herein, the Respondent was licensed to practice Licensed Bachelors Social Work (LBSW)<sup>1</sup> in the State of Maryland. The

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<sup>1</sup> § 19-101 (i) "Practice bachelor social work" means to practice social work:

- (1) Under the supervision of a licensed certified social worker, licensed certified social worker-clinical, or licensed graduate social worker who meets the conditions specified in regulations; and

Respondent was first so licensed on June 29, 2015, and her license expires on October 31, 2022.

2. At all times relevant herein, the Respondent was employed by a Department of Social Services (the “Department”) in Western Maryland.

### COMPLAINT

3. On October 19, 2018, the Board received a Complaint (the “Complaint”) against the Respondent from the Director of the Department, a Licensed Certified Social Worker-Clinical (LCSW-C) (the “Complainant”). The Complaint alleges that the Respondent was one of three employees under investigation for bullying employees, insubordination, and, accessing others’ computer email to complete a negative evaluation on a supervisor.

4. Based upon the above, an investigation was undertaken by the Department and one employee was terminated from employment, effective September 11, 2018, and the other two, who were placed in the agency through the County Senior Services Division, were banned from working for the County Department, effective August 27, 2018, including the Respondent, who was then “laid off” by the County government.

5. The Complainant then became aware that, thereafter, on September 15, 2018, the Respondent’s adult child opened a “Go Fund Me” account requesting donations to support her mother’s “legal defense”. The Respondent then became

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(2) Utilizing the education and training required under § 19-302(b) of this title.

involved in a telephone or text conversation with a family member of one of the agency's Senior Care clients for whom the Respondent had been the Case Manager prior to being laid off. The Respondent advised the family that she was no longer employed by the Department and was no longer the Case Manager because the Department had not yet communicated with the family. The Department claims the Respondent informed the family about the Go Fund Me account and her "wrongful termination" and that the Respondent then invited the family to look at the website which is entitled "Snitches Get Stitches." The Respondent claims that her adult daughter, who opened this account, was the one who engaged in the communications about the website and that the Respondent did not extend the invitation.

#### **BOARD INVESTIGATION**

6. Based upon the above, the Board began an investigation. It obtained the Respondent's personnel file, which showed that, *inter alia*, on June 21, 2018, the Respondent received a written warning from her supervisor for her "inappropriate behavior" toward one of the agency's supervisors, a nurse, with whom Respondent disagreed regarding certain client services. The nurse believed that the Respondent spread negative accusations against her, and, on August 16, 2018, the nurse filed a formal complaint with the Department against the Respondent and two other workers which complaint included charges of "gossip, humiliation and undermining her position, which created a hostile work environment." The nurse had discussed concerns with Human Resources and upper management and included the State's policy on bullying,

which she thought had been violated. The Respondent claimed that she disagreed with the nurse's management of certain employees and had encouraged them to file a negative assessment about her.

7. On September 23, 2018, the Director of the Department sent a letter to the Director of Senior Services of the County Government advising the Director that her office had investigated and had determined that the Respondent "clearly demonstrated unprofessional, antagonistic, and unethical" behaviors which involved other employees from the agency, which created a "hostile environment to include intimidation of employees and fear of retaliation". It was also determined that the Respondent "participated in a scheme to damage the reputation of another employee by accessing others' emails in order to complete negative evaluations on a supervisor." The Respondent denies accessing others' computers but admits encouraging them to fill out a confidential supervisory survey form to express their complaints concerning their supervisor.

8. The report concluded that the Respondent was no longer permitted to work at the Department. The Report further indicated that the Respondent's behavior clearly violated the State of Maryland "Bullying in the Workplace Policy" as well as failure to perform assigned duties properly, insubordination, giving false statements to any county official or employee or the public, conduct unbecoming a county employee and dishonesty or theft, as well as misuse of passwords and devising a scheme to defraud. The Respondent points out that she was never allowed to contest the claims made in this

report, because there was never a hearing on the merits and there were various other procedural irregularities.

9. On September 19, 2018, a “Notification of Layoff from County Employment” was sent to the Respondent, and she was notified that, as of September 13, 2018, she was no longer permitted to work for the Department.

10. On October 9, 2018, an appeal hearing was held before Frederick County Government. It denied the appeal without addressing the merits which it said in its letter to Respondent dated October 16, 2018 were “outside the scope of the appeal hearing.” The sole decision was to determine whether to uphold the layoff, which it did. The County’s letter further stated “The County has made no judgment on the validity of the allegations regarding workplace behavior.” It stated the County could only respond to the circumstance that Respondent was prohibited from working at DSS, and because it had no other social work or caseworker positions within Frederick County government that Respondent could perform, the County upheld the layoff decision. It expressly stated that Respondent was not terminated for cause. The Respondent could not afford to further contest the proceedings.

11. By encouraging employees to express their negative feedback on another employee through the supervisory survey on that employee, the Respondent violated §19-311 (4) (Commits any act of...misconduct in the practice of social work); (5) (Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional

standards in the practice of social work); and (6) (Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board).

12. By appearing to solicit funds from or support of a Go Fund Me page from a former client's family member, the Respondent violated § 19-311(4) (Commits any act of ...misconduct in the practice of social work); (5) (Engages in a course of conduct that is inconsistent with generally accepted professional standards in the practice of social work); (6) (Violates any provision of this title or regulations governing the practice of social work adopted and published by the Board); (4) Engage in solicitation which amounts to undue influence).

### CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact, the Board concludes that the Respondent violated Board's Act and regulations, pursuant to §§ 19-311 (4), (5), and (6) of the Act, and COMAR 10.42.03: .01 A. and B; and COMAR 10.42.03 B (4). The Board dismisses § 19-311 (2).

### ORDER

Based on the foregoing Findings of Fact and Conclusions of Law, it is this 12<sup>th</sup> day of November, 2021, by a majority of the Board hereby:

**ORDERED** that Respondent's license is placed on PROBATION for THREE (3) years:

1. During the first nine months of Probation, the Respondent shall take and pass a Board-pre-approved college-level ethics course and document same

to the Board. The Course shall not count towards the Respondent's Continuing Education Credits (CEUs);

2. Within the first three (3) months of Probation, the Respondent shall write a letter of apology to the Nurse who filed the Complaint against her and document that the letter was received by the Nurse;

**ORDERED** that Respondent shall bear all costs of complying with this Order.

and it is further

**ORDERED** that the effective date of this Order is the date that it is signed by the Board;

**ORDERED** that Respondent shall obey all laws and regulations that govern the practice of social work in the State of Maryland.

**ORDERED** that the Respondent shall not serve or continue to serve as a Board Authorized Sponsor, presenter and/or trainer of social work continuing education learning activities, an Ethics Tutor, an evaluator for the Board, or a Board-Approved Supervisor for a period of 5 years from the effective date of this Consent Order; and it is further

**ORDERED** that, should the Board receive information that the Respondent has violated the Act or if the Respondent violates any conditions of this Order or of Probation, after providing the Respondent with notice and an opportunity for a hearing, the Board may take further disciplinary action against the Respondent, including suspension or revocation. The burden of proof for any action brought against the



Respondent as a result of a breach of the conditions of the Order shall be on the Respondent to demonstrate compliance with the Order or conditions; and it is further

**ORDERED** that, for purposes of public disclosure and, as permitted by Md. General Provisions §§ 4-101 *et seq.* (2014 Vol. and 2020 Supp.), this document consists of the contents of the foregoing Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law, and Order, and is reportable to any entity to whom the Board is obligated to report and will be displayed on the Board's website.

11/12/2021

Date



Karen Richards, LCSW-C, Chair  
Board of Social Work Examiners

**CONSENT OF SANDRA BOLINGER, LBSW, RESPONDENT**

I, **SANDRA BOLINGER, LBSW, Respondent**, by affixing my signature hereto, acknowledge that:

1. I am represented by attorney, Janice B. Rockwell, LLC, and have knowingly and voluntarily consulted with my attorney prior to signing this Consent Order;

2. I am aware that without my consent, my license to practice as a LBSW in this State cannot be limited except pursuant to the provisions of § 19-312 of the Act and the Administrative Procedure Act (APA), Md. Code Ann, State Govt., §§10-201, *et seq.*, (2014 Repl. Vol and 2020 Supp.).

3. I am aware that I am entitled to a formal evidentiary hearing before the Board.

By this Consent Order, I hereby consent and admit to the foregoing Findings of Fact, Conclusions of Law and Order, provided the Board adopts the foregoing Consent Order in its entirety. By doing so, I waive my right to a formal hearing as set forth in § 19-312 of the Act and §§10-201, *et seq.*, of the APA, and any right to appeal as set forth in § 19-313 of the Act and §§10-201, *et seq.*, of the APA. I acknowledge that in the event of my failure to abide by the conditions set forth in this Order and following proper

procedures, I may suffer disciplinary action, possibly including revocation, against my license to practice as a LBSW in the State of Maryland.

10/4/21  
Date

Sandra Bolinger  
Sandra Bolinger, LBSW

Janice B. Rockwell  
Read and approved by:  
Janice B. Rockwell, Esquire

STATE OF Maryland :  
CITY/COUNTY OF Frederick :

I HEREBY CERTIFY that on this 4th day of October, 2021, before me, a Notary Public of the foregoing State and (City/County), personally appeared **SANDRA BOLINGER, LBSW**, and made oath in due form of law that signing the foregoing Consent Order was her voluntary act and deed, and the statements made herein are true and correct.

AS WITNESSETH my hand and notarial seal.

Janice B. Rockwell  
Notary Public

My Commission Expires: May 17, 2023

